

Message Text

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE FREETOWN 0451

LONDON FOR SEITZ-PLEASE PASS TO BLAKE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SL, US

SUBJECT: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY CALLS ON FOREIGN MINISTER

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY BLAKE SPENT HOUR WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MINAH FEBRUARY 16. MEETING WAS GENERAL AND ATMOSPHERE GOOD, REFLECTING MINAH'S STATED BELIEF OF GOOD AND IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS.

2. BLAKE USED OCCASION TO INDICATE INCREASED US INTEREST IN AFRICA AND TO ENCOURAGE CONTINUED DIALOGUE ON MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. MINAH SAID HE VALUED HIS EXCHANGES WITH USG, STATING SPECIFICALLY HIS APPRECIATION THAT WE HAD KEPT HIM INFORMED DURING THE ANGOLA AFFAIR.

3. BLAKE USED FACT THAT MINAH HAD JUST RETURNED FROM SITE OF SOON-TO-BE INAUGURATED MANO RIVER BRIDGE TO ENCOURAGE GOSL TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE MANO RIVER UNION. HE SAID USG FEELS ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN AFRICAN COUNTRIES IS IMPORTANT. MINAH SAID MRU HAS STARTED WELL AND MAY SOON BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE GAMBIA AND GUINEA. GOSL SAW SUCCESSFUL SMALLER REGIONAL ORGANIZATION AS IMPORTANT FIRST STEP BEFORE ECOWAS COULD BE SUCCESSFUL.

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4. DURING DISCUSSION OF GOSL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MINAH

SAID GOSL INTERESTED IN FOREIGN INVESTMENT, BUT HAD SUFFERED IN PAST FROM COMPANIES THAT INVESTED MINIMAL AMOUNT, RECEIVED MAXIMUM TAX HOLIDAYS AND OTHER CONCESSIONS, AND AT END OF GRACE PERIOD LEFT GOSL WITH INFERIOR PRODUCT, MINIMAL EMPLOYMENT, AND LITTLE REVENUE. THE BEHAVIOR OF A FEW SUCH PROJECTS WAS BEGINNING TO SOUR LOCAL ATMOSPHERE. HE HOPED THAT PROJECTS ENCOURAGED BY LAST YEAR'S OPIC VISIT WOULD BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY.

5. MINAH SAID GOSL CONCERNED ABOUT HIGH COST MAINTAINING FOREIGN MISSIONS. IN THIS CONTEXT, GOSL CONSIDERING CONSOLIDATING ITS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND MISSION TO UN. HE ASKED FOR BLAKE'S VIEW ON THIS. BLAKE SAID THAT, WHILE HE COULD UNDERSTAND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS THAT WOULD LEAD TO SUCH REASSESSMENT AND WHILE GOSL MUST DECIDE WHERE IT WISHED TO SPEND ITS MONEY, USG STRONGLY PREFERRED THAT GOVERNMENTS MAINTAIN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO FACILITATE BILATERAL COMMUNICATIONS. BLAKE COMMENTED THAT TIME WHEN US INCREASING ITS INTERESTS IN AFRICA AND US/SIERRA LEONE RELATIONS IMPROVING WAS UNUSUAL TIME TO REDUCE LEVEL OF GOSL PRESENCE IN WASHINGTON.

6. MINAH RAISED LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE, AND MENTIONED THAT GOSL ATTORNEY GENERAL WOULD BE SPENDING TWO MONTHS AT CONFERENCE, THUS INDICATING SERIOUS INTEREST ON PART OF GOSL. MINAH SHOWED FRUSTRATION AT GOSL INABILITY TO PATROL ITS OWN WATERS. BLAKE CLARIFIED BRIEFLY MINAH'S MISCONCEPTION THAT USG HAD ALREADY EXTENDED FISHING RIGHTS TO 200 MILES, INDICATING THAT NEW US LEGISLATION WOULD COME INTO EFFECT JULY 1977 IF FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE WERE NOT PRODUCTIVE, POSITION MINAH SEEMED TO APPROVE.
SAMUELS

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